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A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, horticulturist, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered through WRC and 37 other radio stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, Tuesday, September 9, 1930.

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Hello Friends:

Today, I am going to talk on a subject that I am sure will interest those of you who purchase your supply of fruits and vegetables, as well as those who produce them for sale. On last Thursday and again on Saturday, I spent a little time on the Washington, D. C. farmers' market. At this time of the year the farmers around Washington are bringing to the market great quantities of all kinds of fruits and vegetables, and the markets the past week were especially large with a great variety of products. I was especially interested to note the condition in which many of these products were offered for sale. Bunched vegetables, for example, were, in many instances, poorly graded, untrimmed, not well washed, and unattractive in appearance. They lacked that most essential selling factor -- attractiveness.

I couldn't help drawing a contrast with those I saw on the Milwaukee, Wisconsin farmers' market two or three weeks ago. The products offered by the Milwaukee gardeners were so clean and attractive that you wanted to purchase whether you really needed them or not.

Now, I am not condemning conditions on the Washington farmers' market, for similar conditions are found on many markets throughout the country. I realize that the farmer who comes to the market occasionally is working under a disadvantage in the matter of uniformity of product, but there can be little excuse for failure to properly trim and bunch the vegetables or to have them clean. I do not object to their being delivered in secondhand crates or baskets, provided the packages are clean and the vegetables are fresh, well graded, and washed where necessary.

The digging and storage of potatoes will soon begin and in that connection just a word about careful handling. About this time last year, I took occasion to condemn in no uncertain terms the rough handling to which potatoes for the market are often subjected, and I had a number of very favorable comments from consumers. Careful handling is especially important with sweet potatoes, and while white potatoes do not decay to the same extent as do sweet potatoes, careless handling results in blackened spots which show up when it comes to preparing them for use. In the case of sweet potatoes it is often suggested that they should be handled like eggs. This may seem a little extreme, but I assure you that if you want your sweet potatoes to keep to the best advantage, you had better handle them just about as carefully as you would eggs. Sweet potatoes grown on sandy soil as a rule have very little soil adhering to them, while those grown on the clay loam and river bottom soils like we find in the Kaw River Valley of Kansas, usually have considerable soil adhering to them. By drying the sweet potatoes in the sun before removing them to the storage house or cellars, a great deal of this soil will

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be loosened and the potatoes will go into storage in a cleaner condition. White potatoes should not be exposed to the sun any longer than possible.

When it comes to the gathering and handling of apples, care to avoid bruising is even more important than in the case of potatoes. Apples stored on the farm are inclined to decay anyway on account of the temperature and other conditions under which they must necessarily be kept, so it is doubly important that they be handled carefully to avoid bruising. In picking apples don't pour them roughly from the picking sacks or baskets into barrels or boxes, but if poured at all, lower the picking sack into the container into which they are being poured, and then by taking hold of the bottom of the picking sack, pour the apples into the box or barrel in such a way that they will not be bruised. I have seen apple pickers in commercial orchards stand at full height and dump the contents of their picking sacks into boxes on the ground with such force that the apples would rattle like blocks of wood. Of course, they did that when the orchard superintendent was not looking.

While we are assured that, taking the country as a whole, there will be no shortage of food, I believe that it is essential that those of us who have fruits and vegetables that may be preserved for winter use should employ every precaution to save them in the best possible manner.

We covered the question of home storage of fruits and vegetables pretty thoroughly on our Farm and Home Hour program 2 or 3 weeks ago, but for the benefit of any of you who did not hear that talk, I would suggest that you get a copy of Farmers' Bulletin No. 879 on the home storage of vegetables. Those of you who have quantities of sweet potatoes to store would do well to get a copy of Farmers' Bulletin No. 1442-F on sweet potato storage.

Let me repeat what I said at the beginning, that appearance counts for so much in the sale of farm products, especially perishable products, including fruits and many of the vegetables that are easily bruised in handling, that it pays to grade your products and handle them carefully.

A few days ago I received a brief letter from one of my old friends who lives in the pretty little town of Jacksonville, Texas -- said he just wanted to tell me how much he enjoys the Farm and Home Hour. A gentleman and his wife in Atlanta, Georgia, commenting on my reference to the scripture last Tuesday have inclosed a clipping of one of Hambones' Meditations -- I want to quote it for you -- Here it is --

"Tain' no wonder de good Marster done hilt back de rain w'en folks won' pay de ch'ch -- dey bin prayin' fuh rain 'stid O' payin' fuh rain!!

I guess Hambone is about right in his quaint philosophy.

Come again friends we are always glad to hear from you and our radio latchstring is always out and you can come in without knocking.